IT CANNOT RAIN BUT IT POURS;

OR,

LONDON STREWED WITH RARITIES.

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THIS jeu d'esprit is one of the few occurring in the Miscellanies which were written by Dean Swift. Peter, the Wild Boy, to whom it principally relates, was found in 1725, in the woods of Hamelen in Hanover, walking upon his hands and feet, climbing trees like a squirrel, and feeding on roots and grass. He was brought to England, and committed, for some time, to the charge of Dr. Arbuthnot, when he became the subject of this ludicrous narrative. The late ingenious, learned, and eccentric Lord Monboddo, was disposed to receive, as authentic, many of the facts which are here given by way of satire and ridicule, such as Peter's snatching at the chamberlain's staff, and attempting to kiss Lady Walpole. But this was a subject upon which the venerable metaphysician indulged himself in great extravagancies, averring the discovery of Peter to be a more extraordinary phenomenon than the discovery of thirty thousand fixed stars, more than we are already acquainted with. The truth is, that Peter, like other individuals discovered in the same situation, was nearly an idiot, and could not even acquire the use of language. He was long boarded at a farm-house in Hertfordshire, where he died in 1785, aged, as was supposed, about seventy-two years.

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BEING

An Account of the arrival of a White Bear, at the house of Mr. Ratcliff, in Bishopsgate street; as also of Faustina, the celebrated Italian singing-woman; and of the Copper-farthing Dean from Ireland.

AND LASTLY,

Of the wonderful Wild Man that was nursed in the woods of Germany by a wild beast, hunted and taken in toils; how he behaveth himself like a dumb creature, and is a Christian like one of us, being called Peter; and how he was brought to court all in green, to the great astonishment of the quality and gentry; 1726.

WE shall begin with a description of Peter the savage, deferring our other curiosities to some following papers.

Romulus and Remus, the two famous wild men of antiquity, and Orson that of the moderns, have been justly the admiration of all

mankind; nor can we presage less of this wild youth, as may be gathered from that famous and well-known prophecy of Lilly's, which being now accomplished, is most easily interpreted:

> When Rome shall wend to Benevento,
> And Espagne break the assiento;
> When eagle split shall fly to China,
> And Christian folks adore Faustina:
> Then shall an oak be brought to bed
> Of creature neither taught nor fed;
> Great feats shall he achieve——

The Pope is now going to Benevento; the Spaniards have broke their treaty; the emperor trades to China; and Lilly, were he alive, must be convinced, that it was not the empress Faustina that was meant in the prophecy.

It is evident by several tokens about this wild gentleman, that he had a father and mother like one of us; but there being no register of his christening, his age is only to be guessed at by his stature and countenance, and appears to be about twelve or thirteen. His being so young was the occasion of the great disappointment of the ladies, who came to the drawing-room in full expectation of some attempt upon their chastity; so far is true, that he endeavoured to kiss the young Lady Walpole, who for that reason is become the envy of the circle: this being a declaration of nature in favour of her superior beauty.

Aristotle says, that man is the most mimic of all animals; which opinion of that great philosopher is strongly confirmed by the behaviour of this wild gentleman, who is endowed with that quality to an extreme degree. He received his first impressions at court: his manners are first to lick people's hands, and then turn his breech upon them; to thrust his

hand into everybody's pocket; to climb over people's heads; and even to make use of the royal hand to take what he has a mind to. At his first appearance he seized on the lord chamberlain's staff, and put on his hat before the king; from whence some have conjectured, that he is either descended from a grandee of Spain, or the Earls of Kingsale in Ireland. However, these are manifest tokens of his innate ambition: he is extremely tenacious of his own property, and ready to invade that of other people. By this mimic quality he discovered what wild beast had nursed him; observing children to ask blessings of their mothers, one day he fell down upon his knees to a sow, and muttered some sounds in that humble posture.

It has been commonly thought that he is Ulrick's natural brother, because of some resemblance of manners, and the officious care of Ulrick about him; but the superiority of parts and genius in Peter demonstrates this to be impossible.

Though he is ignorant both of ancient and modern languages, (that care being left to the ingenious physician who is entrusted with his education,) yet he distinguishes objects by certain sounds framed to himself, which Mr. Rotenberg, who brought him over, understands perfectly. Beholding one day the shambles with great fear and astonishment, ever since he calls man by the same sound which expresses wolf. A young lady is a peacock; old women magpies and owls; a beau with a toupee, a monkey; glass, ice; blue, red, and green ribbons, he calls rainbow; a heap of gold, a turd. The first ship he saw, he took to be a great beast swimming on her back, and her feet tied above her; the men that came out of the hold, he took to be her cubs, and wondered they were so unlike their dam. He understands, perfectly, the language of all beasts

and birds, and is not, like them, confined to that of one species. He can bring any beast what he calls for, and no doubt is much missed now in his native woods, where he used to do good offices among his fellow-citizens, and served as a mediator to reconcile their differences. One day he warned a flock of sheep, that were driving to the shambles, of their danger; and upon uttering some sounds, they all fled. He takes vast pleasure in conversation with horses; and going to the Mews to converse with two of his intimate acquaintances in the king's stables, as he passed by, he neighed to the horse at Charing Cross, being as it were surprised to see him so high; he seemed to take it ill, that the horse did not answer him; but I think nobody can undervalue his understanding for not being skilled in statuary.

He expresses his joy most commonly by neighing;* and whatever the philosophers may talk of their risibility, neighing is a more noble expression of that passion than laughing, which seems to me to have something silly in it; and besides, is often attended with tears. Other animals are sensible they debase themselves by mimicking laughter: and I take it to be a general observation, that the top felicity of mankind is to imitate monkeys and birds; witness harlequins, scaramouches, and masqueraders; on the other hand, monkeys, when they would look extremely silly, endeavour to bring themselves down to mankind. Love he expresses by the cooing of a dove, and anger by the croaking of a raven; and it is not doubted, but that he will serve in time as an interpreter between us and other animals.

Great instruction is to be had from this wild youth

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* This assertion, and the commentary upon it, seems an anticipation of opinions, more largely enforced in the Fourth Part of Gulliver's Travels.

in the knowledge of simples; and I am of opinion, that he ought always to attend the censors of the college, in their visitation of apothecaries' shops.

I am told, that the new sect of herb-eaters * intend to follow him into the fields, or to beg him for a clerk of their kitchen; and that there are many of them now thinking of turning their children into woods to graze with the cattle, in hopes to raise a healthy and moral race, refined from the corruptions of this luxurious world.

He sings naturally several pretty tunes of his own composing,† and with equal facility in the chromatic, enharmonic, and diatonic style; and consequently must be of infinite use to the academy in judging of the merits of their composers, and is the only person that ought to decide between Cuzzoni and Faustina.‡

I cannot omit his first notion of clothes, which he took to be the natural skins of the creatures that wore them, and seemed to be in great pain for the pulling off a stocking, thinking the poor man was a-flaying.

I am not ignorant, that there are disaffected people, who say he is a pretender, and no genuine wild man. This calumny proceeds from the false notions they have of wild men, which they frame from such as they see about the town, whose actions are rather absurd than wild; therefore it will be incumbent on all young gentlemen who are ambitious to excel in this character, to copy this true original of nature.

The senses of this wild man are vastly more acute than those of a tame one; he can follow the track of a man, or any other beast of prey. A dog is an

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* Dr. Cheyne's followers.

† In fact Peter could sing a little, and could repeat a tune after having heard it once or twice.

‡ Two rival singers at that time in the Italian operas here.—H.

ass to him for finding truffles; his hearing is more perfect, because his ears not having been confined by bandages, he can move them like a drill, and turn them towards the sonorous object.

"Let us pray the Creator of all beings, wild and tame, that as this wild youth by being brought to court has been made a Christian; so such as are at court, and are no Christians, may lay aside their savage and rapacious nature, and return to the meekness of the Gospel."